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Security Council

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Resolution 1653 (2006)

Adopted by the Security Council at its 5359th meeting, on 27 January 2006

The Security Council,

Recalling its resolutions and the statements by its President on the Great Lakes region of Africa and concerning the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Burundi, and in particular resolutions 1649 and 1650 of 21 December 2005,

Recalling its resolution 1625 (2005) on strengthening the effectiveness of the Security Council and the role of civil society in the prevention and resolution of armed conflict, particularly in Africa,

Further recalling its resolution 1631 (2005) on cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations and General Assembly resolution 59/213 (2004) on cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union,

Reaffirming its respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of all States in the region, and *recalling* the importance of the principles of good-neighbourliness, non-interference and cooperation in the relations among States in the region,

Reiterating its condemnation of the genocide in Rwanda of 1994 and the armed conflicts which have plagued the Great Lakes region of Africa in the past decade and expressing its profound concern at the violations of human rights and international humanitarian law resulting in wide scale loss of life, human suffering and destruction of property,

Aware that the link between the illegal exploitation of natural resources, the illicit trade in those resources and the proliferation and trafficking of arms is one of the factors fuelling and exacerbating conflicts in the Great Lakes region of Africa, and especially in the Democratic Republic of the Congo,

Expressing its deep concern at the devastating impact of conflict and insecurity on the humanitarian situation throughout the Great Lakes region and their implications for regional peace and security, especially where arms and armed groups move across borders, such as the long-running and brutal insurgency by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in northern Uganda which has caused the death,

abduction and displacement of thousands of innocent civilians in Uganda, the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo,

Welcoming the efforts undertaken by the Tripartite Plus Joint Commission comprising Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda as a significant contribution to heightened dialogue between the countries of the Great Lakes,

Recalling its previous resolutions that reaffirmed the importance of holding an international conference on peace, security and stability in the Great Lakes region and recognizing the continued ownership of the process by the countries of the region with the facilitation of the United Nations, the African Union, the Group of Friends and all others concerned,

Taking note with satisfaction of the holding of the First International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region, in Dar es Salaam, on 19 and 20 November 2004,

Recognizing the "Good Neighbourly Declaration" of September 2003 by the representatives of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda and the Dar es Salaam Declaration of 2004 adopted by the first Summit of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region,

Recognizing the significant achievements and progress in the peace processes in the Great Lakes region, the recent installation of a democratically elected government in Burundi and progress in the transition to democratic institutions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo,

Expressing its gratitude to the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and to the United Nations Operation in Burundi (ONUB) for their significant contribution to peace in the region,

Paying tribute to the donor community for the assistance it is providing to the countries in the region, and encouraging it to maintain that assistance,

Welcoming General Assembly resolution 60/1 on the 2005 World Summit Outcome and in particular the commitment to address the special needs of Africa,

1. *Commends* the positive role played by the Secretary-General, the African Union, the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes region and other stakeholders in organizing and participating in the First Summit of the International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region of Africa;

2. *Urges* the countries of the Great Lakes region to continue in their collective efforts to develop a subregional approach for promoting good relations, peaceful coexistence, peaceful resolution of disputes as envisaged in the Dar es Salaam Declaration and *encourages* them, in partnership with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and other stakeholders, to finalize the preparations for the second Summit to be held in Nairobi, including a clear focus on peace and security issues, with a view to adopting a Security, Stability and Development Pact for the countries of the Great Lakes region;

3. *Calls* upon the countries of the region to agree on confidence-building measures based on effective and concrete actions;

4. *Encourages* and supports the countries of the Great Lakes region, individually and collectively, to strengthen and institutionalize respect for human rights and humanitarian law, including respect for women's rights and protection of children affected by armed conflict, good governance, rule of law, democratic practices as well as development cooperation;

5. *Encourages* the development of the prevailing goodwill and relations among the countries of the region which have positively influenced the successful transition in Burundi and the course of the ongoing democratic transition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo;

6. *Urges* all States concerned to take action to bring to justice perpetrators of grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and to take appropriate measures of international cooperation and judicial assistance in this regard;

7. *Expresses* its support for the efforts by States in the region to build independent and reliable national judicial institutions in order to put an end to impunity;

8. *Strongly condemns* the activities of militias and armed groups operating in the Great Lakes region such as the Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR), the Palipehutu-Forces Nationales de Libération (FNL) and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) which continue to attack civilians and United Nations and humanitarian personnel and commit human rights abuses against local populations and threaten the stability of individual States and the region as a whole and *reiterates* its demand that all such armed groups lay down their arms and engage voluntarily and without any delay or preconditions in their disarmament and in their repatriation and resettlement;

9. *Stresses* the need for the States in the region, within their respective territories, to disarm, demobilize and cooperate in the repatriation or resettlement, as appropriate, of foreign armed groups and local militias, and *commends* in this regard the robust action of MONUC, acting in accordance with its mandate, in support of the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC) in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo;

10. *Underscores* that the governments in the region have a primary responsibility to protect their populations, including from attacks by militias and armed groups and stresses the importance of ensuring the full, safe and unhindered access of humanitarian workers to people in need in accordance with international law;

11. *Calls upon* all States in the region to deepen their cooperation with a view to putting an end to the activities of illegal armed groups, and *underlines* that these States must abide by their obligations under the Charter of the United Nations to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of their neighbours;

12. *Urges* the international community, non-governmental organizations and civil society to increase humanitarian assistance to civilians affected by displacements and violence from years of protracted conflicts in the Great Lakes region;

13. *Commends* the efforts of the United Nations Organization Missions in the region in accordance with their respective mandates, to protect civilians, including humanitarian personnel, to enable delivery of humanitarian aid and to create the necessary conditions for the voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons;

14. *Requests* the Secretary-General to make recommendations to the Council, as appropriate, on how best to support efforts by States in the region to put an end to the activities of illegal armed groups, and to recommend how United Nations agencies and missions — the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS), MONUC and ONUB — can help, including through further support for the efforts of the governments concerned to ensure protection of, and humanitarian assistance to, civilians in need;

15. *Calls* upon the countries of the region to continue in their efforts to create conducive conditions for voluntary repatriation, safe and durable integration of refugees and former combatants in their respective countries of origin. In this regard, calls for commensurate international support for refugees and reintegration and reinsertion of returnees, internally displaced persons and former combatants;

16. *Calls* upon the countries of the region to reinforce their cooperation with the Security Council's Committee and with the Group of Experts established by resolution 1533 (2004) in enforcing the arms embargo in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to combat cross-border trafficking of illicit small arms, light weapons and illicit natural resources as well as the movement of combatants, and *reiterates* its demand that the Governments of Uganda, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi take measures to prevent the use of their respective territories in support of the activities of armed groups present in the region;

17. *Urges* the governments concerned in the region to enhance their cooperation to promote lawful and transparent exploitation of natural resources among themselves and in the region;

18. *Welcomes* the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and *underlines* its potential importance to the work of the Security Council in this region;

19. *Invites* the international community, including regional organizations, international financial institutions and relevant bodies of the United Nations system, to support and complement the peacebuilding and development initiatives required to sustain peace, security and stability in the countries of the Great Lakes region;

20. *Decides* to remain seized of the matter.